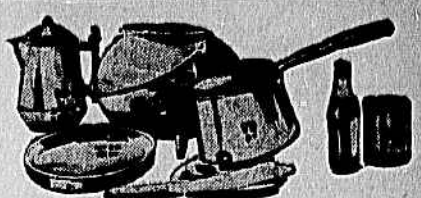




# School for Housewives

## By Marion Harland



### COMMENT FOR THE HOUSEWIFE

## The American Girl — Number Eight

### MEN'S VIEWS ON CHILD PROBLEM

I HOPE you will pardon the intrusion, for, being a man, I can hardly be considered as a housewife. But the text of some of the letters upon the Household Economy subject seems a sufficient excuse for interfering in other folks' business and "putting my oar in." I also hope that my remarks may be of benefit to at least a few of those little struggling housewives with whom I heartily sympathize.

"To begin—I am a husband and father of two strong, healthy boys, ten and twelve years old, two fine healthy girls, four and six years old. We have also a number of dogs, cats, birds and chickens. (The chickens are self-supporting.) We are city-raised people and are thoroughly capable of distinguishing between the quality of a good porterhouse steak and one from the chuck. All the articles placed on our table are plain, substantial goods of the very best quality.

"My family is now living in the country, and when I and my boys sit down at table and commence an attack upon a dish of potatoes I am afraid the effect would somewhat disconcert it if it didn't altogether paralyze the correspondent who advocated only one peck each week. Six large loaves of good home-baked bread would just keep us on the verge of starvation for two days. These two articles, bread and potatoes, are our staple food, but it is absolutely necessary that they be supplemented by generous quantities of beef, pork, mutton, eggs and bacon, etc., washed down by liberal quantities of tea, coffee and milk, and garnished by relays of fruit, salad and other commodities.

"We do a considerable amount of outside work and exercise, and find the food we eat is necessary to preserve the stamina required for such work. We could not get along without it.

"Our expenses for twelve months average \$240.00 for provisions, soap, oils and other necessities.

"Right here I want to say that I believe it to be impossible for any woman, man or angel to supply a table for four persons on any such sum as four, or five, or six dollars a week and feed them in a good, substantial manner. I was obliged to buy my meat by the thirteen cents' worth, my potatoes by the peck, etc., etc., paying the market price for each article all the year round. I could not supply my family as I am at present doing for less than ten dollars a week. We buy in large quantities goods of the very best quality at a time when the market is at its lowest. Last season we bought twenty bushels of potatoes at thirty cents. They will be all gone before the new crop arrives.

"We buy the highest grade of flour at four dollars and fifty cents; we use about eight barrels a year. We consume nearly a barrel of butter during a scarcity of potatoes. We buy sugar by one hundred pound sacks, two each year.

"Beans, peas, oatmeal and cornmeal, etc., by the peck, bushel, or hundred pounds. We consume large quantities of these articles. Canned goods we buy by the case. Figs, dates, prunes and other dried fruit in wholesale packages.

"Fresh fruit by the barrel or wholesale basket. Salt by the barrel. Soap by the box. Head-light oil by the barrel, etc. Possibly you have begun to think that we must be vegetarians. Yet we use four hind quarters of beef at six cents per pound; two sides of pork at ten cents; two or three carcasses of mutton at eight cents; about twenty-five pounds of salt pork; fifty pounds of lard; one case canned salmon and a scattered quantity of canned lobster, blancher-paste and other delicatessen. About one hundred pounds of butter, in ten pound lots, costing about sixteen to eighteen cents.

"I am looking forward to the time when I can afford to buy my entire year's staple supplies for one shipment. Our expenses will then amount to \$240.00 per annum for the same amount of goods.

"Now, I don't expect that everyone is in a position to buy fifty dollars' worth of groceries at one time, or if he is, that he has the convenience for storing them. But I do think that a good deal of improvement could be accomplished along these lines. Let these good little housewives approach their husbands in a business-like way and get them interested in the plan of buying wholesale. If some philanthropist would devote a portion of his wealth to erecting public cold storage houses, in popular places, where people could store perishable goods in quantities in small rooms, charging a monthly or yearly rental, it would prove a great benefit to city people. The weekly wages system and the habit of buying pound quantities is the cause of the working class living in this hand-to-mouth way. Every time they purchase just enough of a certain food for one meal an allowance of ten per cent. should be allowed for waste.

"Some of your correspondents seem fearful lest their lords and masters should happen across the writing of 'A. M.' or 'Allan.' But, if any of them should happen across this letter I would like to say: 'Boys, don't be mean! A woman can't feed you and the children on four dollars a week. No, not in the best of times. Be reasonable. And, if the bank account is not large enough to allow of her drawing an allotment, at least knock your heads together and help her. Form a Trust! It's fashionable. Consolidate your means and thus reduce expenses.'

The writer of this excellent letter has touched lightly upon the one weak spot in a system in the main admirable. The people who must most practice economy are, as a rule, of wide application, 'not in a position to buy fifty dollars' worth of groceries at a time.' Furthermore—and this point our correspondent regards by a tribute to his wife's thrift which have not room to publish—the common species of hording in tempted by an ample supply of provisions to wastefulness.

"Anne!" cried one mistress, spying six fine potatoes at the bottom of the tin of dirty water and paring the rest was emptying into the swill-barrel. "Those are perfectly good. Why did you throw them away?"

"Folks! and why shouldn't? There's three barrels of them in the cellar. 'Taint worth a guinea's while to be carrying those few back!"

It is a representative anecdote, and sadly true.

Moral—No. 1: Buy by wholesale when you can.

Moral—No. 2: Having done this, take care of the stores yourself.

Another paragraph, sacrificed to the tyranny of space, gave as the writer's opinion that "the man who does out four dollars a week to his wife for market-money deserves to be fed upon peanuts and liver."

I WRITE to ask if you or any of your sisters could tell me how to make a silk waist presentable that is worn under the arms? It is good every other way, not a break or soil anywhere, except under the arms. I am stout and all my waists go in that way before they are soiled or worn, and I cannot afford to throw them away. I mend them as neatly as I can, but I always feel that someone is noticing the patch, do not feel at ease, or 'dressed' in them. Now if you could suggest some way of trimming that would hide the patch, I would be very grateful, and I think all of my stout sisters will feel very much obliged to you if you can help them out in their trouble.

My ingenuity fails to conjure up a style of trimming that can be carried across from front to back, close under the arms. If you are a clever needlewoman you can put in a piece—not a patch—so neatly that it will not be perceptible four feet away when the seams have been pressed. But I refer and do refer to the members of our Family Circle.

I HAVE cleaned black lace in a very simple way told by a friend who learned it from a French laundress. Write out of cold water two towels or two pieces of white cotton cloth. Lay the lace on one, being careful to pick out the pattern. Cover with the other and iron with a very hot iron. The dirt will show on the under piece and the lace will be cleaned slightly.

"My landlady says she once moved into a house that had bed-bugs in it. They were in a wooden partition. She put Paris green in it, very hot water and dipping a long-handled brush in it, washed the partition. As she did so, the bugs dropped on the floor. She then washed the floor with the water before putting down a carpet. She saw no more bed-bugs. Care must be taken to not put the hands into the water."

"C. M. P."

### RECIPES

LEPKUCHEN. (By Request.)

I HAVE the following recipe from my grandmother: "Two cups of New Orleans baking molasses; 1 cup of thick milk; 1 cup of brown sugar; 1 cup lard; 1 teaspoon of ginger. 1 teaspoonful of baking powder. Rub together sugar and lard, then add milk and molasses. Pour boiling water on the soda, add that and the ginger. Add flour until so thick that you can add no more with a spoon, then set away until next day in a cold place. Roll out and bake in a moderate oven. To have them light, mix as little flour as possible in the dough when rolling out."

"L. E. M. (A Pennsylvania German)."

FRIED TOMATO SOUP. (Contributed.)

CUT a quart of ripe, raw tomatoes into quarters, removing the cores. Roll in plenty of flour, and fry brown in hot butter. Then brown on both sides add salt to taste and milk—a little at a time. Stew tender; rub through a colander; season with salt, pepper, onion-juice and a little sugar; return to the fire, bring to a boil; add a pinch of soda and pour into the tureen.

EGG SOUP.

POUR into a saucepan one pint of milk, a scant half-pint of water, butter the size of an egg, salt, pepper and onion-juice to taste. Heat until boiling hot, let it stand where it will keep very hot and drop into it six fresh eggs without breaking the yolks. Leave the eggs in until coagulated, but still soft. Then very carefully lift them to a platter garnished with parsley. Have ready as many slices of bread toasted as you have eggs. Pour the hot soup over the toast and place an egg on each slice of toast. Serve all very hot.



MY appeal to fathers of families—"grave, clear-eyed men"—to write out their views upon the progressive ideas prevalent in America with regard to child-bearing and child-raising has met with a hearty response. It is my purpose to publish in to-day's issue a symposium of a few of the many letters I have received from men. The theme is momentous. I know of none fraught with more solemn import to us as a nation.

NO. I.

Is a forceful yet temperate expression of the opinion of an intelligent retired business-man.

As I have read the contributions to your department, suggested by "A Warning to Mothers," the matter resonates in my mind in a question between the near and the long view. You are just in your reply to "L. E. P." when you make the gravamen of your argument the inquiry—"Does the investment pay?" That is, taking the certainties of suffering, toil, solicitude, as well as the partial restriction of liberty, and the possibilities—liness, perhaps of casual death, or worse still, a growth to evil—taking all this into consideration, I say, is the venture of motherhood justified?

"One shrinks from degrading one's pen to a consideration so mean, so unworthy—a consideration which would be scorned in respect to ventures in the commercial world. The perpetuation of ourselves, our best influence, the claims upon us of the future of home, of country, of all the interests for God and humanity—to be put in the balance and to be weighed with our personal convenience, our ease and the pleasures of a vaporous society?"

"We are bound to recognize the suggestions of your correspondent—whose and experience in the loss of her most precious treasures claims all sympathy—but there is not one of them which would deter one from the repeated pursuit of commercial gains. The husband would not desert from toil and rattle to the 'Home of the Indigent' because of a panic which had wrecked his business. The Kansas farmers who for several successive years saw their crops blasted by drought or devoured by grasshoppers, did not cast away their confidence in the covenant between the earth and the elements. Possible disaster is contemplated in every relation, but the hand of industry is not paralyzed or the wheels of thrift permanently locked.

"The fatality of the near look is bound to be regret—perhaps worse—a barren, lonely, self-childing old age.

"I am no longer a hunter. The shadows of a setting day have heightened that they show the sun touching the horizon; but the heart is not old. There are homes the doors of which fly open to welcome 'father' as the most honored guest, and the ringing voices of grandchildren that renew to him the sweet memories of his childhood, and make him young again. His generation is gone, and he is in the front rank of the procession that follows them, but the beauty of life in those who have been spared to sustain his declining years is untold wealth to his heart. It is a hackneyed story—but the mother of the Gracchi was wise in her generation.

Yes! if you will reduce it to 'the investment pays!' but that is the least of the rewards. D. R. A."

NO. II.

Writes after fifteen years' of married life:

UNDER the conditions as stated by "L. E. P." she should never have let herself stray into such a field of false ideas simply because by the will of the Almighty her dear little ones were taken from her. It is easy to say by reading between the lines of her letter that, as her statement stands, she is laboring under a false idea, false to herself as a woman, and false to the husband who, she states, so dearly loves her—because she uses the lame excuse that because she had lost before she would lose again. This appears to place her in only one position, namely, she is putting S.I.D.F. before duty. "I wish to deny emphatically her statement regarding men not wishing to share the care and responsibility of our children. I admit there are some such cases, but if such were carefully investigated you would find that the fault is not altogether the man's. A true man fully appreciates the responsibility, and he enters the sphere with his mind made up to love, help and care for his companion in all and through all troubles that may arise to cast a shadow on their pathway. When both parties are properly mated you will always find the father anxious to contribute for his child as the mother and that he will assist all he can to console her and lighten her cares.

"In my opinion the conditions as stated by 'L. E. P.' only exist when a man who rushes into the married state on short notice. As, for example, a first meeting to-night, a walk to-morrow evening, off to St. Joe the day following and—well! I suppose the divorced court next week, or worse—a continual dog and cat life over after.

"Under such conditions what can we expect of the little ones brought into this world and reared amid such surroundings? In conclusion, with all due respect to 'L. E. P.' and her couple who marry purely for the selfish companionship of each other and the sole object of having a good time! Any woman who refuses to do her duty when nature calls is not fit to be called 'Woman.'

"When the dreary and lonely days of old age come upon them, then they will cry out with the awful longing of a hungry heart for that blessing and peace earned by a true woman as a reward for all her trials and heart-aches in rearing those dear little darlings, who, by their love and kind attention, smooth out the rough places in their declining years."

"W. McC."

NO. III.

The distinguished head of a Business College drives straight to the point and wastes not a word:

I PRESUME my words will be too 'plain and brave' for publication. But in answer to your request for what men think of "L. E. P.'s" letter in answer to "A Warning to American Mothers," permit me to say: If I were the husband of such a wife I should say: "Thank God that my children are safely housed in Heaven away from the influence of their mother! No wonder that men who have wives mattered after 'L. E. P.' spend their evenings at the club. What man would not? She says: 'My husband feels the same as I do on the subject.' Poor fellow! He probably knows what's good for him, but doubtless he has often wished that she might be 'safely housed' with her children.

"There are many such women—too many, probably—yet they are necessary for the contrast. There are still many old-fashioned girls and young mothers to whom Home, Sweet Home, and sacred womanhood are as heaven on earth to them:

"Woman—mother, Woman—wife,  
The dearest names that language knows;  
Thy breast with holy motives rife,  
Thy breast with pure affection glows  
Thou queen, thou angel of my life!"

"H. C. S."

NO. IV.

Our courteous consulting chemist makes himself responsible for his "plain and brave" speech, by advising me that I may append his signature in full if I wish.

HOW any good and true woman can look at motherhood as an "investment" is not comprehensible to me. To understand modern "progressive" wives who deliberately refuse to bear children to their husbands, one must have the experience, either of a fashionable doctor, or trusted pharmacist, or probably a Catholic priest, who have been in pharmacies with a "fashionable" clientele long enough to despise from the bottom of my heart what are falsely called "our best people." I take it for granted that this civilization of ours, for instance, would not exist if (and I say it in a reverent spirit) the mother of Jesus had been such a "progressive" up-to-date woman, as now brazenly flaunts her "common sense," her commercialized counterfeit of a "woman's soul" before you and me and the rest of the readers.

I take it that we live in a period of mental unrest, with old ideas and landmarks going for ever and new ones as yet not sufficiently established to be 'conventionally' available for those women unable to decide for themselves on such fundamental traits of the race as is the 'feminine eternal'—God's eternal! Due evil wealth as applied to this generation.

"Taking this lack of mental equilibrium into consideration, the views of 'L. E. P.' are merely those of certain strata of modern womanhood of the 'better' classes. Why such women marry at all, since they are not willing to assume the burdens and duties of married life, is not quite clear. As any physician must at once see, the misuse or abuse of a healthy body could tell 'L. E. P.' the misuse or abuse of a healthy body carries its own penalty, ending in this sort of thing in a disordered nervous system, certain dangerous pathological changes, invalidism and premature age and death.

"The refusal of motherhood can historically be traced as an incident of decadence, always directly caused by indulgence in idle luxury. It was so in Greece, in Imperial Rome, in the Byzantine civilization. In our days it marks the gradual disappearance of the Yankee strain in our national life, the prevalence of neurasthenia and graver 'troubles.' For the mills of the gods grind slow, but sure, and we reap the harvest of such 'progressive' ideas as expounded by 'L. E. P.' in divorces, suicides and suffering. Qu'en savez? The French government has been forced to deal with this matter as a serious peril to national existence. I am sorry for 'L. E. P.' in a certain way, but more so for her husband who accumulates 'dollars'—for what? To live a lonely age, devoid of anything but the hollow diversions which can be purchased by his dollars, if he does not lose them before he dies. He lives a lonely life with his wife, who by that time probably will be a ruddy invalid or a clubwoman with a mission, or a 'fancy' for an ugly pug dog or cat.

"You ask for plain speaking, my dear friend, and if anything calls for plain language it is this horrible evil."

"A. W. W."

(Member 285 American Press Writers' Association.)

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